Body Biography:
A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens
Pocket Books (New York: 2007)

CONTEXT
This strategy will be used after reading the novel. This strategy is also aimed specifically to reach students struggling with the language of the novel (English Language Learners, students with learning disabilities, etc.).

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY
A Christmas Carol can be a difficult text for middle school students, especially ones that struggle with language learning (ELL students, students with learning disabilities, etc.). The body biography allows students to connect with the characters and themes of the book through a less literary and more visual and creative experience. This activity also allows students to work collaboratively so that the artistic, interpersonal, and literary intelligences of different group members can be used effectively.

DIRECTIONS
After the students have read A Christmas Carol, one follow up activity is the body biography. Explain to students that they will be creating a visual and written character sketch of one of the important characters from the novel. The body outline should be filled with symbolic images and quotes from the novel that describe the character in full. Students will also complete a 1-2 page piece that gives the reasoning behind their choices for the body biography. Divide the students into groups and have them choose their character. After students have completed their body biographies, the groups will present in front of the class. Make sure to post the work around the classroom.

ASSESSMENT
When students have completed their body biographies, they will also complete a paper detailing why they made the choices they did. This will help students understand the completeness of their character and become more aware of what is going on in their character’s development. The teacher can monitor how each group member is participating by moving from group to group while they are working. The final presentation will also allow for all members to participate and show their work.

Based on Drolet handout in class 11/04/09

Robertson, BYU, 2009
Your group will be creating a body biography for one of the characters in the novel. A body biography is a visual character sketch (describes the main aspects of a character: actions, motivations, history, virtues/veses, etc.).

Step One:
Choose a main character from the novel (Scrooge, Cratchit, one of the three spirits, Scrooge’s nephew Fred).

Step Two:
I will provide your group with a long sheet of butcher paper so you can trace a member of the group. Draw an outline of the body. At the top of the paper, write the name of the character that you chose.

Step Three:
Fill the body in with symbols that represent your character, important quotes from the novel regarding your character, notable features or characteristics of your character, or anything that you think will visibly portray your character. Use enough evidence that the body is colorful and full, but it doesn’t need to be so crammed full that it is hard to understand. Make sure that your choices are not only creative, but analytical and accurate as well. You will need to back up your artistic choices with evidence from the novel in a short explanation paper described below.

Step Four:
After you have created your body biography, your group will write a brief (1-2 page) explanation defending your choices in the biography. If you used a certain symbol, describe why it represents your character. If you used quotes, tell why they are meaningful. Make sure that everyone in the group participates in this explanation because the whole group will be giving a presentation on your body biography. Everyone will need to contribute some explanation of your body.

BE CREATIVE AND HAVE FUN!
Ideas for your Body Biography
Placement: Where you place your artwork can be meaningful. For example, what is most important to the character might go where there heart is, what they say – their mouth, what they do – their hands. You could place the character’s motivation or objective along their backbone, what drives them.

Virtues/Vices: What are you characters most admirable qualities? Their worst? How can you represent them visually?

Colors: What colors do you associate with your character? Why?

Symbols: What symbols does the text give that might be associated with your character? What objects do you associate with your character that might not be in the novel?

Changes: How has your character changed within the novel? Trace these changes within your artwork.